DOCUMENT RESUME

ED 228 162 SP 021 519

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TITLE Effective Teacher Behaviors as an Avenue to Enhance the Self-Esteem of Teachers.
PUB DATE 22 Sep 82
NOTE 8p.; Paper presented at an Inservice held at Cholla High School (Tucson, AZ, September 22, 1982).
PUB TYPE Viewpoints (120)

EDRS PRICE MF01/PC01 Plus Postage.
DESCRIPTORS *Classroom Techniques; Elementary Secondary Education; Expectation; Listening Skills; Nonverbal Communication; Positive Reinforcement; Questioning Techniques; Role Models; *Student Teacher Relationship; Teacher Attitudes; *Teacher Behavior; *Teacher Effectiveness

ABSTRACT

A discussion of how teachers perceive students and interact with them points out that one characteristic of an effective teacher is a high level of interactive skills. Selected teacher behaviors which enhance the quality of teacher-student contacts are discussed. It is emphasized that modeling desirable behavior is a primary responsibility for teachers at all levels, since this provides a basis for establishing a classroom climate of courtesy and trust. Within this framework, other teacher behaviors are considered, such as the critical skills of constructive questioning and creative listening. While these behaviors are essential, particularly in dealing with low achieving students, others are described as equally important. Consideration is given to the effective use of time and clarity of teacher presentation. Also identified as supportive teacher behaviors are immediate feedback and encouragement and modeling empathetic understanding. Consistency in these behaviors, regardless of the ability levels of the students, is identified as a hallmark of effective teaching. (JD)

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EFFECTIVE TEACHER BEHAVIORS AS AN AVENUE TO ENHANCE THE SELF-ESTEEM OF TEACHERS

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Tucson, Arizona

September 22, 1982

SP 021 519

EFFECTIVE TEACHER BEHAVIORS AS AN AVENUE
TO ENHANCE THE SELF-ESTEEM OF TEACHERS

Research has shown that teachers do make a difference. What and how they teach impacts on student achievement. The effectiveness of their style is a critical factor in student acquisition of knowledge. Effective teacher behaviors are of particular importance to educators as one's teaching pattern is the singular factor in the complex act of teaching over which the individual has control.

As professional educators, we can practice applicable research findings by incorporating them into our individual mode of operation. Practicing techniques that work can also enhance one's sense of efficacy. The Rand Study indicated efficacy -- or a sense that what one does was worthwhile -- was a contributing factor to a teacher's self-esteem. Efficacy is related to interpersonal skills and persons with high level interactive skills are more effective teachers of cognitive skills (Aspy and Roebuck, 1977).

Student success is the bottom line in accountability and in most instances effectiveness is determinedby scores on standardized tests. This isn't to infer that this is the only objective to consider, but for the moment, these variables are being used. Use of specific teaching patterns has produced significant gains in math and reading scores. I venture to say that social objectives are changed also; however, these are not as easily compared.

Teaching is not simply an act of cognition, more fundamentally teaching is interaction. Student-student, student-teacher and administrator-teacher interactions form the foundation for learning.

These essential interactions are directly influenced by our perceptions. How we perceive others determines the way we respond to them. Expectations are based on perceptions. The study Pygmalion in the Classroom was evidence of this and pointed to the frequency of interaction with high achievers more often than low achievers emerged. The quality and quantity of interactions infer a belief in one's ability. Interactions indicate to a student they can and these students are more willing to try and more likely to succeed.

Since interactions are vital, their equitable distribution is even more vital; heightened awareness of interaction patterns is our goal. As a basis for this study, identify five common characteristics attributed to perceived low achievers and five characteristics attributed to perceived high achievers. Actually write these characteristics to focus your thoughts on perceptions you hold.

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Research has shown that teachers do not respond as supportively or motivatingly to those perceived as low achievers. Why don't teachers interact equitably? The lack of motivation or the incentive to learn was an often heard criticism when students failed to read, compute or learn geography. Motivation is seen as a teacher's responsibility. Strategies to address motivation are imbedded in specific teaching behaviors. When teachers practice these effective patterns, equitably, all students evidence significant change. All of this boils down to a long look at how we perceive students and interact with them to enable them to reach their potential.

A quick checklist may emphasize a point. List all your students in a class. The high achievers and discipline problems seem to come to mind quickly. What about those nondescript souls in the middle? Are there some individuals we can't focus on? Are we unconsciously erasing another's identity by not recognizing him or her? Teachers are in very powerful positions. What we do and how we do it impacts the lives of others. We have a professional responsibility to utilize every effective technique known regarding the state of the art and science of teaching to make sure that what we do, makes a difference that counts!

Approximately 2% are born teachers, the rest of us work at it and we need techniques that work. An interaction model provides that tool. The model is based on sound teaching principles and is classroom tested. It provides a quick overview of purposeful behaviors and supportive interactions. Just how they are used is going to be determined by teacher attitude and style. The interactions themselves are not new nor alarming. In fact, they are observable strategies many of you use daily. The point being begged is to distribute them equitably with all students. How to do this in a sequential, developmental format has been formally designed in the TESA program (Phi Delta Kappan). The organization plan provides a network of peer support and has proven successful in schools across the country as well as here in Tucson (Munroe, 1980, 1981).

With short exposure to a few selected behaviors, you can design means to practice supportive interactions in your classroom.

A point that needs to be emphasized is that of modeling. Teachers model behaviors they desire. We have to live what we preach. It is the discrepancy between word and action that gives students reason to question. A trust relationship can be built when we as teachers provide the groundwork for respect and courtesy while holding to a businesslike operation. Students need to see you working if they are expected to be "on task" and complete an assignment on time. If time is important, teachers too must be efficient in their use of classtime (Munroe, 1978).

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If you were to identify one technique or pattern that characterizes the teaching profession, would you consider questioning? A very large amount of teaching involves asking questions. As a group, we don't always ask the best questions; yet, the avenue for constructive interaction rides on those opportunities, making it a critical skill.

Asking questions in relation to perceived ability levels can surprise us. Recall or "simple fact" questions are often directed to low achievers, yet these are not necessarily easy to answer. When asking questions, teachers wait an average of 1-1/2 seconds for answers. What does that say about the kinds of questions being asked? If thinking is necessary, few answers can be stated in that 2-second interval! If the question was worth asking, is it worth an answer? What can you as the teacher do to enhance the probability of an answer? Waiting five seconds increases the probability of an answer. It also builds the self-concept that "I believe you are able." When a person believes in you, it places quite a burden on you to live up to that expectation. Studies have shown that waiting 10 or 15 seconds further enhances the possibility of response. It can be emphasized that "this requires thinking, we'll wait because I believe you know," thus setting the stage to help others know that they will be allowed time to think and respond. Receiving "right" answers changes the teacher's sense of efficacy for having taught the content. Yes, student feedback impacts teacher behavior (Klein, 1971).

From the behavior latency, it is natural to provide clues to the answer. Teachers do this for those perceived able, yet not as frequently for those most in need of help. Delving, probing or restating the question indicates there is another avenue of clarification. In fact, learning preferences come into play. Students (adults) may prefer to have questions posed as contrasts, as similiarities, or in relation to objects. When rephrasing provides relevant cues, students are more confident in their responses.

Factors related to clarity of teacher presentation also influence student learning. Clarity relates to speech patterns and organizational patterns as well as lessons that are coherent and sequential. Structuring patterns that build on what has been learned and what is expected provide the learners with needed guides to tie learning to a meaningful whole. Structuring behaviors counter fragmented learning and its detrimental effect on teachers and students. Successful instruction reinforces for teachers a belief in being able to teach, an aspect of one's confidence. Power, a component of self-esteem, addresses the capability of influencing conditions of importance. Teacher sense of power communicates <u>all</u>

can learn and we can do it together.

Sixty percent of the time in secondary classrooms, the teacher is talking. Effective classrooms have reduced teacher talk, utilizing methods to involve students. To counter the quantity of time talking, effective teachers practice active listening skills. Modeling these skills, students too listen more attentively. It's criminal for a student to feel that their response wasn't even heard. How do we listen? How would your students indicate they know you are listening? How do they know you're not listening? Request that feedback from students; accept and use it to increase their access to learning.

You evidence listening when you take an active interest in the speaker through eye contact, stopping irrelevant motion and by personalizing what you say to them. Try not to contaminate what they are saying with your ideas. Avoid statements like "Don't you think that. . ." No one wants to be told what they are to think! Ask for an explanation, example or how they felt about the task, to allow clarification. This also indicates the speaker was heard.

Listening allows teachers to demonstrate acceptance, a behavior seldom observed in classrooms. Evidence acceptance of another's view by saying, "I'm not sure I would have looked at it that way but I see your point." This allows the student to hold an opinion that differs. Forcing consensus doesn't allow thinking. Acknowledge a shrug of the shoulders. Galloway (1980) suggests you verbalize the situation and say, "Is it possible you are not free enough to speak?" Shake your head. "We'll be ready for your comments later." Teachers can send the message, "I understand what you're not saying and I accept it." Practicing attentive listening skills involves nonverbal messages conveyed by facial and arm gestures and body postures as well as eye contact. Preferences for making meaning may dictate that some "miss" these cues. Nonverbally, teachers use signals to reinforce and encourage students; if a portion of the class doesn't "read" these as valued rewards, try written feedback. Feedback can be more available and accepted by secondary students through nonverbal messages; public displays of praise are often frowned upon by one's peers. Teachers need to be sensitive to the pressure and provide reinforcement creatively. Remember 93% of communication is nonverbal. Quite an interesting statistic. Even more interesting is the statement by students that nonverbal behaviors are read as more valid. How do students read you? Considering your interpersonal skills, how aware are you of the cues you give? At the same time, are you sensitive to the nonverbal cues students send?

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An aspect of nonverbal behavior is proximity. Moving about the room within arm's distance of the student, for reasons other than discipline, provides a silent message. "It's O.K. (safe) for teacher to be near me." Monitoring seatwork has a very dramatic affect on the amount of "on task" time. Since task oriented behavior is critical to learning, we see it appear in effective teaching. Soar (1972) found less than 8% of the students on task when seatwork was unsupervised; this was raised to 80% in small group classwork with direction. Biddle and Adams (1970) found the majority of interaction in classrooms in a T-shaped area. Of that area, 63% of the time students who responded were in the first three seats in the stem of the T.

Simply being available because the teacher is circulating provides individual help if it is needed, immediate feedback and encouragement opportunities -- three behaviors supportive of student achievement. Individual assistance enhances access to learning opportunities the basis for instruction, reported less than half of one percent of classtime. Since feelings impact on one's ability to attend, and in school, attending presumes learning making the ability to cope with feelings an important skill. Students (and teachers) need to articulate feelings recognizing feelings are not right or wrong. Modeling empathetic understanding can make teaching more relevant, classrooms more humanistic and students more willing to accept their peers.

The teacher behaviors related to desist or classroom management again points to the need for consistency in manner. Some students receive only desist interactions, many of which are command contacts. Catch 'em doing good is really the theme of most disciplinary approaches currently on the market. We know from psychology that to extinguish a behavior we replace the negative with a positive. Reinforce the behavior you desire, keeping an eye on the preventive aspect. Recognizing that the perfect class with never a desist hasn't surfaced, corrective patterns will be needed. Whatever is done by the teacher to maintain a businesslike orientation in the class, should not reveal an expectation of appropriate behavior from some students and misbehavior from certain other students. Research reports non-threatening desists are related positively to academic achievement in reading centers. Rosenshine (1971) noted that hostile, threatening desists are not even effective in controlling behavior and relate to a lack of growth in reading.

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These and other teaching behaviors that work are a part of the knowledge base on which we define our profession. Practitioners need to use techniques that work, not as a cape that fits all, but as strategies to incorporate into one's teaching patterns. Demonstrating strategies that work results in academic success of students, the criterion of measure for effective schools. Teachers in effective schools enjoy a sense of accomplishment and enhance self-esteem for what they did made a difference.

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